



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

Mr. Bundy
(Mr. Schlesinger has original)
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S/S 19594

November 30, 1962

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR. ==
THE WHITE HOUSE

Through: Mr. McGeorge Bundy s

Subject: Italy's Center-Left Government
and the Cuban Crisis

There is enclosed a memorandum concerning one aspect of the Italian reaction to the Cuban crisis. That subject, among others, is treated in breadth in Research Memorandum REU-75, dated November 3, 1962, entitled Our Major European Allies and the Cuban Crisis. The enclosed memorandum is concerned only with the Italian domestic political consideration posed by the Italian Socialist Party's role in the governing majority, which was one of the factors determining the Italian response to the Cuban crisis.

W. H. Brubeck
William H. Brubeck
Executive Secretary

Enclosure:

Italy's Center-Left Government
and the Cuban Crisis.
November 26, 1962.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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ITALY'S CENTER-LEFT GOVERNMENT AND THE CUBAN CRISIS

Lessons for American Foreign Policy

The Italian center-left government responded to the recent acute stage of the Cuban crisis with a weaker manifestation of solidarity toward our position than it has shown in the past. Although Italy's basic alignment with the Alliance was not in doubt, an examination of one influential factor behind its eroded public posture,--that is, the composition of the present government--is set out below, together with some conclusions that may be drawn for our policy toward Italy.

Response of the Italian Government

During the Parliamentary debate on October 23, the day following President Kennedy's speech, Prime Minister Fanfani made an emphatic point of the fact that the US had responded to the grave threat of Soviet missiles in Cuba by taking the matter to the UN and that Italy could not fail to show its solidarity with a friendly and allied nation. An implied therefore between the two clauses was readily apparent to all observers. In his letter of the same date to the President he added the warning that the US quarantine measures caused "the gravest risk for us all," and therefore particularly welcomed our recourse to the UN. In both statements the emphasis was on the appeal to the UN with Italian support following as if in consequence. Only on October 24th did opposition Liberal Party leader Malagodi convey to Ambassador Reinhardt Fanfani's assurance that Italy would follow a "right line" of solidarity with us. Finally, at the time of Khrushchev's yielding to our firm position Fanfani was reliably reported to have just instructed Ambassador Feroaltea to urge that the President extend the US deadline by a few days. During this period also, Fanfani receded from a prior Italian position of support for a NATO embargo on large-diameter pipe to the Soviet bloc apparently because of his fear of showing publicly an Italian hard-line posture during the Cuban crisis.

PSI Response

As anticipated the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) expressed its strong support for the Cuban revolution (in the Italian Parliament) and its absolute condemnation of the American blockade. Notwithstanding the pallid Fanfani expression of solidarity and his emphasis on the US appeal to the UN, the PSI official speaker strongly criticized Fanfani's position. In the PSI party organ, Party Secretary Nenni was almost equally critical of US action, citing the Suez crisis precedent of a NATO ally's refusal to support another ally, as a model which should be copied by Italy. Only a week later did PSI leaders admit to the Embassy that they had initially been overly critical of the US position. A week later still, Nenni in belated equity editorially condemned unilateral moves by either side and noted that Khrushchev's much lauded prudence could

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better have been shown before he sent missiles to Cuba. During the whole period, however, the PSI did resolutely refuse to take any joint action with the Italian Communist Party.

Government Parties' Response

The Christian Democratic (DC) Party's posture conformed to that of Prime Minister Fanfani, although Party Secretary Moro carefully let it be known that he personally recognized the overwhelming priority of the missile issue over the problem of the crisis' incidental effects on Italian domestic politics.

The Social Democratic Party (PSDI) took a legalistic line initially with its leader editorially condemning the blockade as in violation of international law, but during the second week of the crisis the PSDI swung into line with the US position in a manner considerably more forthcoming than that of the majority DC Party. The Republican Party consistently supported the US action.

Motivation for the Italian Government Position

The Italian Foreign Ministry admitted to Embassy Rome that the government was motivated in its weak endorsement of our action by a desire to avoid alienating the PSI, whose support is necessary to the government. Although the PSI had agreed, at the time the government was formed, to avoid attacking Italy's NATO commitment, it is evident that Fanfani desired to avoid as far as possible any gesture which would arouse dormant PSI neutralist principles. In this respect his tip-toeing failed to produce any benefit for us, since it did not in any way muffle the PSI's immediate hostile reaction to the US course. Fanfani was also reliably reported to be furious with the US for failing to consult him well in advance of the crisis stage, so that he might take steps to ease his consequent domestic political problems. His irritation may also have been due in part to Italian sensitivity at appearing to be a pawn following docilely in the path of the major piece on the board.

Conclusion

We may justly be concerned with the Italian Government's response to the Cuban crisis; as established by Prime Minister Fanfani, that response was significantly short of the solidarity former governments would have given and which we would have desired. Fanfani's concern with his domestic political problems was perhaps inevitable, but we have cause for disappointment at the absolute priority given them. Although the critical attitude of the PSI was expected, we may legitimately be gratified at the care taken by the PSI to keep its reaction apart from that of the PCI and may also welcome as a sign of growth the PSI's later recognition of its early hastiness in opposing our action.

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Although Italy's basic alignment with the US has not been affected, we may anticipate that in any future world crisis, Italy will be likely again to exhibit less open solidarity with us than in the past, so long as the Italian Government is dependent on an alliance with the PSI, since it is doubtful that the PSI will move very rapidly toward active support of Alliance solidarity. The desirability of drawing the PSI into the democratic coalition in Italy and of thereby strengthening Italy politically, socially, and economically may make some sacrifice of Italian open solidarity with us in fields of foreign policy matters a tolerable one, so long as the ultimate reliability of Italian adherence to the Alliance is not compromised. We recognize also that factors such as national pride and increasing national prosperity may also contribute to a more independent Italian foreign policy line in the future and that the PSI participation in the government majority is not the sole cause of such a development. Nevertheless, the immediate cost to us in foreign policy terms, of the trend to which the center-left government contributes, should be recognized as an appreciable one since, under less favorable circumstances, the relatively "soft" Italian supporting stance on Cuba might have encouraged a Kremlin miscalculation of the West's determination.

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